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SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR DRL/SEA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM PREL AJ

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO STATE 44903: FOLLOWING UP ON THE ACTIVISTS FOR DEMOCRACY AND DISSIDENTS OUTREACH REQUEST

REF: A. STATE 44903

1B. 07 STATE 108924

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - NOT FOR INTERNET DISTRIBUTION.

11. (SBU) In response to reftels, as part of the Embassy's democracy strategy, the Ambassador and Emboffs regularly meet with human rights activists, opposition members, and other democracy defenders, such as journalists. These cases have been reported throughout the year; highlights are listed below. Per the reftel description, there are no such dissidents in country.

12. (SBU) In September 2007, Emboff met with a formerly pro-government Member of Parliament (MP) who was arrested and lost his seat following a scuffle in Parliament, which observers reported was a set-up. In September 2007, Emboff traveled to Azerbaijan's exclave of Nakhchivan to investigate two particularly abhorrent cases of human rights violations, meeting with a journalist who was arrested and beaten in detention, and an opposition activist who was forcibly committed to a mental institution. In October 2007, Emboff visited in the hospital a journalist from an independent newspaper who was beaten in the course of investigating a forced eviction. In October 2007 and again in January, the Ambassador met with the key human rights activists who work on political prisoner issues. In November 2007, the Ambassador met with a group of youth activists, many of them affiliated with the political opposition. In honor of International Human Rights Day, in December 2007, the Ambassador met with a group of journalists, each of whom had been physically attacked over the past two years. In March, the Ambassador visited in the hospital a journalist from an opposition newspaper who was stabbed.

13. (SBU) In addition, the Embassy uses every opportunity to encourage high-level visitors to Baku to engage with these groups. For example, during a November 2007 visit, EUR A/S Fried met separately with the leaders of Azerbaijan's main opposition political parties and key human rights activists. In separate January visits, Senator Lugar and Representative Wexler met with the major opposition leaders, and Representative Schuster met with several key opposition MPs. During a March visit, EUR DAS Bryza met separately with the primary opposition leaders and with key human rights activists.

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